

VZCZCXRO1910
PP RUEHROV
DE RUEHAE #0703/01 2401052
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 281052Z AUG 07
FM AMEMBASSY ASMARA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9060
INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1425
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1602
RUEPADJ/CJTF-HOA J2X CAMP LEMONIER DJ
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASMARA 000703

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

LONDON, PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/27/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [SU](#) [ER](#)

SUBJECT: EASTERN FRONT LEADERS HEAD TO KHARTOUM, FINALLY

REF: ASMARA 491

Classified By: CDA Jennifer A. McIntyre, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: After months and months of bickering amongst themselves, the leaders of the Eastern Front (EF) are finally scheduled to leave Asmara for Khartoum on August 27, and take up their positions within Sudan's Government of National Unity (GNU). Implementation of security and national development provisions under the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement also appears to be moving forward, albeit slowly. Yet despite the EF's victory lap through Asmara, giving camels to the Eritrean racing team and lauding the Eritrea's role in bringing peace to Sudan, the Eastern Front (EF) remains a tenuous political entity. The Government of the State of Eritrea (GSE) and the Eastern Sudanese agree that troubles persist within the Eastern Front organization, however the Eastern Sudanese remain hopeful that they can regroup and rebuild themselves into a unified political entity by 2009. END SUMMARY.

EASTERN FRONT LEADER SPEAKS UP

¶2. (C) On August 24, Poloff met with Dr. Amna Dirar, Secretary of the Eastern Front and Vice Chair of the Beja

SIPDIS

Congress. Dr. Dirar confirmed the Eastern Front plans to depart Asmara on August 27, and fly directly to Khartoum for the swearing-in ceremony with President Bashir. Following the ceremony, she plans to return to Eastern Sudan to meet with her remaining supporters. In response to questions about capacity and capability of the Eastern Front, Dr. Dirar claimed she had been meeting with some EF members in Asmara about plans to strengthen the party, including building the organization at the grassroots level through committees in the Red Sea, Kassala and Gedaref provinces of Sudan. According to Dr. Dirar, she and others, including Mubrouk Mubarak Salim of the Rashaida Free Lions, have discussed coalescing the EF elements into a unified party by 2009, a party not comprised of coalition groups but rather a stand-alone party with individual membership. She further explained that the Eastern Front will strive to build an alliance with the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM).

¶3. (C) When asked about recent media reports that the Beja Congress had split from the Eastern Front, Dr. Dirar refuted

the reports. What has happened, she said, is that certain Beja members who were unhappy with the distribution of posts have begun creating their own entities; however, these exist only in name. These splinter groups are being encouraged by Sudan's National Congress Party (NCP) to challenge her leadership of the Beja. She also passed on the rumor that Musa Mohammed Ahmed, Chairman of the Eastern Front and Beja Congress, will join the NCP. Dr. Dirar firmly believes that the NCP is engaged in a strategy aimed at breaking up the Eastern Front.

4 (C) With regards to the integration of the rebel militia with the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), Dr. Dirar stated that all Eastern Front soldiers are now in SAF camps. Within the next few weeks, these soldiers will be classified either for duty in the SAF or for demobilization. Of the 5000 Eastern Front troops, less than twenty percent wish to be demobilized. Those chosen for the SAF will be given an appropriate rank and additional training. For those who are demobilized, Dr. Dirar plans to advocate for special programs to help individuals transition to civilian life and to seek payouts which will allow them to initiate new careers by assisting with purchasing land, vehicles or supplies to start businesses.

15. (C) The planning for the development fund continues. Dr. Dirar anticipates that international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) will play a critical role. When asked about how the INGOs will be able to operate in Eastern Sudan when the Government of Sudan has a history of restricting their operations, she replied, "there is no war in the East now, the Government of Sudan cannot limit their activities anymore." She acknowledged the Eastern Front will be unable to effectively implement development programs by itself and will need the support and expertise of others.

ASMARA 00000703 002 OF 002

GSE COMMENTS ON PROSPECTS FOR THE EF

16. (C) In a meeting with Poloff on August 13, Yemane Ghebreab, Head of Political Affairs for the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) and the GSE's primary interlocutor on Sudan, described the Eastern Front as "very weak, not united, and with no strong leadership." While he believes that there is still a constituency supporting the idea of the Eastern Front as a unified political party, Ghebreab expressed uncertainty about whether the current leadership could make this a reality. He noted, as a comparison, that even with stronger leadership in the SPLM, the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) faces difficulties and uncertainties.

17. (C) As for the development fund, Ghebreab said he believes the Government of Sudan will honor its commitments to implement the development fund and has established the structure to do so. However, he anticipates that the NCP will try to use the fund to its own political advantage, in order to gain Eastern votes during the planned 2009 elections.
MCINTYRE